

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5793

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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EO: 11652 NA

TAGS: PINS, TU

SUBJ: LEFTIST STUDENTS PROTEST STUDENT DEATH

REF: ISTANBUL 0048

1. DEATH OF STUDENT KERIM YAMAN JAN 23 TRIGGERED MASSIVE DEMONSTRATION JAN 24 AND 25 AT ISTANBUL UNIVERSITY. KERIM DIED FROM WOUNDS RECEIVED DURING CLASH BETWEEN LEFTISTS AND RIGHT-WING "COMMANDOS" AT VATAN HIGH SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURE JAN. 23 WHERE LEFTISTS HAD ORGANIZED CAFETERIA BOYCOTT. IN DRAMATIC GESTURE LEFTIST STUDENTS REMOVED KERIM'S BODY FROM MORGUE AND BARRICADED THEMSELVES IN UNIVERSITY, ALLEGEDLY IN ORDER PREVENT ALTERED AUTOPSY RESULTS. SEVERAL THOUSAND STUDENTS MAINTAINED ALL-NIGHT VIGIL OVER BODY, UNTIL ARRANGEMENTS MADE WITH AUTHORITIES TO PERFORM AUTOPSY TO STUDENTS' SATISFACTION. DEMONSTRATORS CARRIED SIGNS CONDEMNING FASCISM, IMPERIALISM AND NATIONAL ACTION PARTY LEADER ALPARSLAN TURKES. MOURNERS THEN OBTAINED PERMISSION TO MARCH WITH CASKET TO FERRY FOR FINAL TRANSPORTATION TO AKHISAR NEAR MANISA, WHERE FUNERAL WAS HELD JAN. 26.

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2. THE INCIDENT SET OFF A WAVE OF CHARGES AND COUNTER-

CHARGES AMONG THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND STATEMENTS BY VARIOUS NATIONAL LEADERS, INCLUDING PRIMIN IRMAK AND RPP LEADER ECEVIT. ECEVIT CALLED FOR CLOSING THE UNIVERSITY INDEFINITELY UNTIL RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVENT HAD BEEN DETERMINED, WHILE EDUCATION MINISTER, ON BEHALF HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL, URGED UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION TO CONTINUE IN SESSION. UNIVERSITY AUTHORITIES MEETING JAN. 27 TO TAKE DECISION. BOTH MAYOR AND MARTIAL LAW COMMANDER ISSUED STATEMENTS DEPLORING VIOLENCE.

3. COMMENT: RIGHTIST COMMANDOS CONTINUE THEIR ATTACKS AND LEFT CONTINUES TO EXPLOIT RESULTING "MARTYRDOMS" TO WHIP UP PUBLIC EMOTIONS. THE MOST RECENT DEMONSTRATION WAS MORE CAREFULLY ORGANIZED THAN THE PROTEST OVER DEATH OF ANOTHER LEFTIST IN DECEMBER (REFTEL). DESPITE LARGE NUMBERS INVOLVED -- ESTIMATED AT ANYWHERE BETWEEN TEN AND FIFTY THOUSAND PERSONS, THERE WERE FEW INCIDENTS OF DISORDER. THIS WAS PROBABLY DUE IN LARGE PART TO SKILLFUL HANDLING BY POLICE. NEW DEPUTY POLICE CHIEF NIHAT KANER TOLD CONGENOFF DURING COURTESY CALL JAN 27 THAT HE HAD PERSONALLY DIRECTED NEGOTIATIONS WITH DEMONSTRATORS. PERMISSION FOR MARCH WAS GIVEN ON CONDITION THAT BODY FIRST BE TURNED OVER FOR AUTOPSY AND THAT DEMONSTRATION LEADERS BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING ORDER. ALTHOUGH POLICE STATIONED AT STRATEGIC POINTS, THEY DID NOT ACCOMPANY MARCH AND THERE WERE NO CLASHES WITH DEMONSTRATORS. KANER SAID FRANKLY HE EXPECTS RIGHT/LEFT CLASHES TO CONTINUE SINCE THEY ARE PROMPTED BY WELL-ORGANIZED AND FINANCED GROUPS ON BOTH EXTREMES. HE THOUGH FORMATION OF STRONG PARTY-BASED GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY AN RPP GOVERNMENT, WOULD TEND TO DIMINISH THE VIOLENCE. IN ANY CASE, HE CONFIDENT THAT WITH TACTFUL HANDLING, POLICE CAN CONTINUE TO CONTAIN SITUATION.

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